



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

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DECREASE OF WOODCOCK AND SNIPE GIVES CONSERVATIONISTS CONCERN

Woodcocks and Wilson's snipes, the only shorebirds on the American sportsman's list for more than 10 years, are causing Federal conservation authorities the same kind of concern that diminishing waterfowl did a few years ago.

Investigations by the Fish and Wildlife Service, says a report to Secretary of the Interior Harold L. Ickes, show that the numbers of both species are unsatisfactory.

Emphasizing the needs for special protection, Dr. Ira N. Gabrielson, Director of the Service, pointed out that these birds do not have the recuperating possibilities that ducks and other game birds have. Woodcocks and Wilson's snipes, he explained, usually lay only four eggs to the nest, whereas ducks lay two, three, or even four times this number.

Like ducks, the shorebirds raise only one brood a year.

The woodcock, it was explained, is primarily a bird of the eastern part of the country, nesting from southern Canada southward and concentrating in winter along the Gulf Coast, chiefly in Louisiana and southwestern Mississippi. The Wilson's snipe, also called jacksnipe, has an extensive range,

breeding north to Alaska, Mackenzie, Labrador, and Newfoundland and wintering throughout the southern part of the United States and farther south.

Snipe Decline Startling

"It seems obvious," said Dr. Gabrielson, "that additional steps must be taken to protect the Wilson's snipe."

Because of its extensive range, this bird for a number of years was not the subject of great concern, he said, but the Fish and Wildlife Service during the past several years has been making special observations.

Service investigators, he said, have found the snipe's numbers "startlingly small" in comparison with those reported by naturalists a decade or two ago.

1940 Woodcock Season Reduced

Storm disasters in January and April of 1940 reduced woodcock numbers so seriously that the 1940 hunting seasons in the United States and Canada were cut in half.

It was hoped then, said Dr. Gabrielson, that the shortened season would be temporary, but later studies have shown that reducing the season for one year has not been enough to bring about the hoped-for recovery.

During 1941, investigations have been made in Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, Maine, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, Ontario, and Quebec. Only in Ontario and Quebec were populations reported as approximating those of two years ago, although Michigan conditions were called fair.

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